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RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000751

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR (BRYZA) AND EUR/CARC (ROOD)  
DEPARTMENT ALSO FOR NEA/IR; NSC FOR MERKEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/02/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KNNP](#) [IR](#) [AM](#)  
SUBJECT: ARMENIANS CAUGHT IN HEADLIGHTS ON IRAN

REF: A. STATE 87682

[1](#)B. YEREVAN 715

Classified By: Amb. John Evans, for reasons 1.4. (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with President Kocharian late June 1 to deliver ref A points on Iran, and with Deputy Foreign Minister Kirakossian the following day. Kocharian had no immediate reaction except to repeat his concerns about the heightening tensions over Iran's nuclear program, to lament his country's geographical situation, to wonder at the behavior of the current Iranian regime, and to say that he "needed to talk to Vartan" -- Foreign Minister Oskanian. DFM Kirakossian understood the need for Armenia to join in the international chorus and promised to work on a statement, but as of COB June 2 we had not seen anything. FM Oskanian is expected to return to Yerevan June 3. END SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (C) Kocharian took aboard the points in our demarche without comment. He then made a number of points consistent with earlier conversations we had had on the subject (e.g. Ref B). In particular he said that he had developed no personal relationship yet with new Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad, and did not have any feel for what kind of person he was -- and, by the way, that he had not yet set dates for a trip to Tehran. He said that, in his opinion, Iranian National Security Advisor Larijani was a more rational actor than Ahmadi-Nejad, and that there might be a chance to talk sense to him.

[1](#)3. (C) Kocharian said that Armenia really had not formulated its approach to the problem of Iran's nuclear ambitions; he had just hoped the issue would "go away" and admitted "frankly, we have been avoiding the issue." He asked questions suggesting he was not fully convinced whether the Iranian regime was seriously pursuing a nuclear weapons capacity or was just blustering for international and possibly domestic political effect. The Ambassador reviewed the evidence, including Iran's long history of not playing it straight with IAEA inspectors and concealing material facts, and referred Kocharian back to the persuasive arguments made by A/S Rademaker in Vienna (Ref. B). Kocharian wondered why Iran did not simply pull out of the NPT regime if it truly intended to obtain a nuclear capability. He mentioned India, Pakistan and Israel. The Ambassador noted that Iran was a signatory to the NPT, which made its current behavior illegal, but that, legalities aside, the international community did not want to see a nuclear-armed Iran. Kocharian agreed heartily with this assessment, saying "we certainly do not welcome the idea of a nuclear Iran on our own border." On the U.S. requests for public support of our diplomatic move, Kocharian said he would have to talk to Vartan Oskanian, the Foreign Minister, who was traveling.

¶4. (C) NOTE: Ambassador John Ordway saw Foreign Minister Oskanian June 1 during the latter's visit to Kazakhstan, and has reported to us that Oskanian reacted positively to the idea of a supportive public statement. Oskanian also shared with Amb. Ordway his thought that Armenia might do better to accede to Iran's invitation for Kocharian to visit Tehran in mid-July, rather than continue stalling on it. Oskanian is still traveling, but we have contacted his top aide, AmCit Salpi Ghazarian, who has said she would attempt to contact Oskanian en route and obtain his input. Ghazarian was certain that Armenia would eventually welcome publicly the "shift in USG position," which she said went some distance to allay "real fears" in Armenia. Oskanian is due to return briefly to Yerevan on Saturday, June 3, and it may well be that his presence is a necessary condition for a statement to be issued. END NOTE.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador encouraged President Kocharian, in addition to responding quickly and positively to our specific requests regarding public statements and keeping the spotlight on Iran's need to choose, to think of other ways in which he might be helpful to the international community's efforts to resolve the problem of Iran's behavior on the nuclear issue. Kocharian made no promises, but said again, "I have to talk to Vartan."

¶6. (C) When we met with DFM Kirakossian, we shared representative samples of what other relevant governments (e.g., Russia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine) had already said in public about Iran's need to choose and the U.S. move. Ambassador also gave Kirakossian a hand-written list of the many governments that have already welcomed the U.S. announcement. Kirakossian promised to take the matter under review, but said that he had to meet with Foreign Minister Oskanian on Saturday morning, June 3.

YEREVAN 00000751 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) COMMENT: The presence -- or at least input -- of Fletcher School grad Foreign Minister Vartan Oskanian seems to be the necessary, and heretofore missing, ingredient here. We have asked the Foreign Ministry press spokesman to notify our press officer immediately if a statement is issued over the weekend. END COMMENT  
EVANS